

(19)



Europäisches Patentamt  
European Patent Office  
Office européen des brevets



(11)

**EP 1 074 904 B1**

(12)

**EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION**

(45) Date of publication and mention  
of the grant of the patent:  
13.11.2002 Bulletin 2002/46

(51) Int Cl.7: **G05D 1/03**

(21) Application number: **00306523.2**

(22) Date of filing: **31.07.2000**

**(54) Lateral control of vehicle for lane following**

Seitliche Steuerung zum Folgen einer Fahrspur

Contrôle latérale pour le suivi d'une voie

(84) Designated Contracting States:  
**DE FR GB**

(30) Priority: **02.08.1999 JP 21917199**

(43) Date of publication of application:  
**07.02.2001 Bulletin 2001/06**

(73) Proprietor: **NISSAN MOTOR COMPANY, LIMITED**  
Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa 221-0023 (JP)

(72) Inventors:

- **Satoh, Shigeki**  
Chigasaki-shi, Kanagawa 253-0082 (JP)
- **Uenuma, Kenya**  
Yokosuka-shi, Kanagawa 237-0063 (JP)

- **Mouri, Hiroshi**  
Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa 236-0028 (JP)
- **Furusho, Hiroyuki**  
Kanagawa (JP)
- **Shimakage, Masayasu**  
Yokosuka-shi, Kanagawa 237-0063 (JP)

(74) Representative: **Godwin, Edgar James**  
**MARKS & CLERK,**  
57-60 Lincoln's Inn Fields  
London WC2A 3LS (GB)

(56) References cited:  
**EP-A- 0 527 665**

*Optische Spurfollowing*

*CCD-Kamera*

*Erfassung von Fahrmarkierungen auf Fahrbahn*

Note: Within nine months from the publication of the mention of the grant of the European patent, any person may give notice to the European Patent Office of opposition to the European patent granted. Notice of opposition shall be filed in a written reasoned statement. It shall not be deemed to have been filed until the opposition fee has been paid. (Art. 99(1) European Patent Convention).

## Description

[0001] The present invention relates generally to a driver assistance system for facilitating steering of a vehicle by tracking a target line on the surface of a roadway, and more particularly to a lateral control of a vehicle for lane-following system based on detection of lane markings (usually painted white or yellow lines) on the surface of a roadway.

[0002] A number of technologies for lateral control by detection of lane markings have emerged. Some of such technologies are disclosed in US-A 5 913 375, US-A 5 765 116 and US-A 5 979 581. In US-A 5 913 375 a CCD camera mounted on a vehicle detects the presence of lane markings on a roadway and carries out lateral control of a vehicle in relation to the detected lane marking. In US-A 5.765 116 a video camera or a CCD camera is used to detect the presence of lane marking. An associated signal processor estimates the vehicle lateral position in relation to the detected lane markings. An electric motor coupled to the steering mechanism is used to provide a torque input to the steering. A controller is designed to assist the driver to maintain the vehicle lane position using a torque input to the steering. In US-A 5 979 581 a laser sensor is used to detect three points on a painted lane marking on the surface of a roadway and three points are used to estimate the position of the lane centerline relative to the vehicle, as well as the geometry of the roadway.

[0003] JP-A 10-103935 discloses a technology to estimate a curve of a lane in a road constructed with a slope rising to the outside edge by correcting image from an image pick-up mounted on a vehicle. This technology is used to correctly estimate the lane centerline used for vehicle lateral control for lane following.

[0004] Most of these technologies relay on the lane centerline for lateral control of a vehicle. Some of drivers may feel uneasy or uncomfortable at being deviated from their favorite lane positions if they are guided toward the lane centerline. Therefore, a need remains for a new approach to the lateral control of vehicles, which allow drivers favorite lane positions.

[0005] EP-A-0 527 665 discloses a system and a method in accordance with the pre-characterising part of claims 1 and 7.

[0006] An object of the present invention is to provide an automated lane-following system which allows drivers favorite lane positions.

[0007] According to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a lane-following system for facilitating steering of a vehicle by tracking a lane of a roadway, as set forth in claim 1.

[0008] The invention will be fully understood by reference to the following drawings, which are for illustrative purposes only:

[0009] Figure 1 is a functional block diagram of an automated lane-following system in accordance with the present invention.

[0010] Figure 2 is a diagrammatic view of a hardware configuration of an automated lane-following system in accordance with the present invention.

5 [0011] Figure 3 is a flow chart of a control routine implementing the present invention.

[0012] Figure 4 is a plan view of a lane defined by lane markings, illustrating the operation of the present invention.

10 [0013] Figure 5 is a timing diagram illustrating the operation of the present invention.

[0014] Figure 6 is a timing diagram illustrating the operation of the present invention.

15 [0015] Figure 7 is a timing diagram illustrating the operation of the present invention.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

20 [0016] For illustrative purposes, the present invention will be described with reference to Figure 1 through Figure 7, where like reference numerals denote like parts, and the method may vary as to the steps and their sequences, without departing from the basic concept as described herein.

25 [0017] Referring first to Figure 1, a functional block diagram of an automated lane-following system employing the present invention is shown. The system comprises a look-ahead sensor 98 mounted on a vehicle 100, and a steering controller 12. The steering controller 12 comprises a feedforward control module 106, a feedback control module 108, a lateral displacement correction module 110, a limit criteria module 112, a target line update module 114, and a logic module 130. It will be appreciated from the discussion herein that steering controller 12 and each of the modules included therein would typically be implemented in software on a computer, but hardware and/or firmware implementations are also contemplated.

30 [0018] Look-ahead sensor 98 is a conventional system including a CCD camera 11 and an associated image processor 102. The CCD camera 11 is mounted on the vehicle, for example, in the middle of the bonnet or grille, or in the vicinity of the internal rear view mirror, in order to detect the presence of lane markings on a roadway, for example the spaced white or yellow lines defining a lane. Image processor 102 acquires images from CCD camera 11 and estimates the position of a lane centerline in relation to the lane markings and the lateral displacement  $Y_n$  of vehicle 100 inwardly of a lane from one of the lane markings. The estimated lane centerline and lateral displacement position signals are fed to steering controller 12 together with an "ACCEPT" signal. Image processor 102 monitors the image signals from CCD camera 11 and switches the "ACCEPT" signal between "1" level and "0" level. If look-ahead sensor 98 locates the lane markings, the "ACCEPT" signal is at the "1" level. The "ACCEPT" signal is otherwise at the "0" level. This "ACCEPT" signal is used in determining

whether or not look-ahead sensor 98 has detected the lane markings.

[0019] The logic module 130 is designed to produce a two-level signal having a first level that allows automated steering control for lateral control and a second level that prohibits such automated steering control. This two-level signal from the logic module 130 is applied to feedforward and feedback control modules 106 and 108. In response to the first level of this two-level signal, feedforward and feedback control modules 106 and 108 are operative to perform their functions. In response to the second level of the two-level signal, feedforward and feedback control modules 106 and 108 are disabled. The two-level signal from logic module 130 is also applied to lateral displacement database, limit criteria, and target line update modules 110, 112, and 114. In response to the first level of the two-level signal, these modules 110, 112, and 114 are disabled. These modules 110, 112, and 114 are operative to perform their functions when a is met under a condition when the second level of the two-level signal is present.

[0020] Feedforward control module 106 produces a feedforward steering term based on the target line from target line update module 114. The target line and the lateral displacement are fed to a summation point 104 to produce a lateral error between the lateral displacement from the target line. Feedback control module 108 produces a feedback steering term based on the lateral error from summation point 104. The feedforward and feedback terms combine to produce a steering control signal for the desired front steering angle, which is sent to a steering actuator (not shown in Figure 1) on vehicle 100.

[0021] Steering controller 12 responds to the signals from look-ahead sensor 98 and produces a steering control signal of greater or lesser magnitude to provide, in turn, a greater or smaller bias to the steering system depending upon the lateral error of the vehicle from the target line. The actuator coupled to the steering mechanism is used to provide a torque input to the steering which may either assist or oppose the steering torque from the vehicle driver.

[0022] The steering bias applied by the lane-following system can be switched on and off by the use of an automated lane-following selector switch 13 on a driver interface 120 that may have a display 122.

[0023] The lane-following system is first switched on by operation of selector switch 13 and display 122 indicates that this has occurred. The system then searches the lane markings. While the system is doing this, the message on display 122 reads "searching". As soon as the system locates the lane markings, display 122 indicates "accept". If the lane marking is lost, display 122 returns "searching" until it again locates the lane marking with display 122 returning to "accept".

[0024] Logic module 130 in response to the "ACCEPT" signal monitors whether or not look-ahead sensor 98 has detected lane markings. If the "ACCEPT" signal

is at "1" level, it is determined that detection of lane marking is present. If it is at "0" level, detection of lane markings is absent. Logic module 130 monitors also the position of selector switch 13. It holds the two-level signal at its first level in response to presence of detection of "ACCEPT" signal when selector switch 13 is turned on. The two-level signal assumes its second level when selector switch 13 is turned off.

[0025] Referring to Figure 4, image processor 102 acquires image signals from CCD camera 11 and estimates the position of a lane centerline between left-hand and right-hand lane markings in terms of a lateral distance from the left-hand lane marking. Image processor 102 estimates also a lateral displacement from the left-hand lane marking of a point  $Y_n$  at a preview distance in front of a vehicle.

[0026] Let us now consider the case where a driver wishes to be guided along the lane centerline. In this case, immediately after the driver switches on lane-following system through selector switch 13, the lane centerline is set as the target line that is tracked by the vehicle.

[0027] Let us now consider the case where a driver tends to steer a vehicle by tracking a leftwardly deviated line from the lane centerline or rightwardly deviated line from the lane centerline as the best lane position. The lane-following system according to the present invention can learn such a deviated line by collecting lateral displacement at number of times when the driver travels on a roadway by tracking a lane at his best lane position. The deviated line given by the learning is set as a target line for the subsequent vehicle lateral control got lane following.

[0028] Referring again to Figure 1, in a lateral displacement collection mode when selector switch 13 is turned off, lateral displacement database module 110 is operative to collect lateral displacement  $Y_n$  from image processor 102 at a number of times within a predetermined period or time  $T_0$  and determines average  $Y_{opt}^*$  that can be expressed as:

$$Y_{opt}^* = 1/n (Y_1 + Y_2 + \dots + Y_n).$$

[0029] The absolute value  $Y_{opt}^*$  is confined to a predetermined window around the estimated lane centerline at limit criteria module 112. Referring to Figure 5, lateral displacements  $Y_{max}$  and  $Y_{min}$  define the boundary of the window. If the estimated lane centerline is expressed in terms of a lateral displacement  $Y_c$ ,  $Y_{max}$  and  $Y_{min}$  can be expressed as:

$$Y_{max} = Y_c + \Delta W,$$

$$Y_{min} = Y_c - \Delta W,$$

where:  $\Delta W$  is an allowable deviation from  $Y_c$ .

Thus, estimated lateral centerline  $Y_c$  determines  $Y_{max}$  and  $Y_{min}$ . At limit criteria module 112,  $Y_{max}$  is set as  $Y_{opt}^*$  if  $|Y_{opt}^*| > Y_{max}$ , while  $Y_{min}$  is set as  $Y_{opt}^*$  if  $|Y_{opt}^*| < Y_{min}$ . The average  $Y_{opt}^*$  as modified is set to target line update module 114. At target line update module 114, target line  $Y_{opt}$  is updated with  $Y_{opt}^*$  from limit criteria module 112.

**[0030]** From the preceding description, it is understood that a leftwardly or rightwardly deviated target line may be set during lateral control for lane keeping as illustrated in Figure 5, so that a driver can take his/her lane position.

**[0031]** Figure 2 illustrates an automated lane-following system according to the present invention. The reference numeral 100 designates a vehicle having a steering system. A steering wheel 1 is connected for unitary rotation with an upper shaft 2a of a steering shaft 2. A lower shaft 2b is coupled with upper shaft 2a via a universal joint 3. Within a rack and pinion type steering gear box 4, lower shaft 2b has at its lower end a pinion (not shown) which is in meshing engagement with a pair of side rods 5 that are operatively connected with front right and left road wheels, respectively.

**[0032]** A wheel gear 6 is fixedly coupled with upper shaft 2a at a portion near its lower end. An actuator in the form of a motor 7 is mounted adjacent upper shaft 2a and has a worm 8 in meshing engagement with wheel gear 6. An electromagnetic clutch 9 is disposed between motor 7 and worm 8. A drive of motor 7 is transmitted to worm 8 to apply steer bias to the steering system.

**[0033]** A steer angle sensor 10, which is attached to an upper portion of upper shaft 2a, detects angular position of upper shaft 2a relative to its neutral position. It generates a steer angle signal  $\theta$  indicative of the detected angular position. Steer angle signal  $\theta$  is fed to a steering controller 12, which is a conventional microcomputer based control unit including, as usual, a central processor unit (CPU), a random access memory (RAM), a read only memory (ROM), an input output device (I/O), and an internal clock. The CPU, RAM, ROM, and I/O are interconnected by data bus. Controller 12 shown in Figure 2 is substantially the same as its counterpart in Figure 1, but it performs the function of the image processor 102 of Figure 1.

**[0034]** Steering controller 12 has an actual steer angle calculation module implemented in software and stored in the ROM. Using this software, the CPU derives actual steer angle  $\theta_d$  from angular displacement  $\theta$  and steering gear ratio. Image signals from a CCD camera 11 are fed to controller 12. CCD camera 11 is mounted on a vehicle 100 in the vicinity of the internal rear view mirror in order to detect the presence of lane markings on a roadway. Controller 12 has an image processor module implemented in software and stored in the ROM. Using this software, controller 12 estimates the position of a lane centerline in relation to the lane markings and the lateral displacement  $Y_n$  of vehicle 100 from one of

the lane markings. The position of the lane centerline is expressed in terms of a lateral displacement from the lane marking. Controller 12 monitors the image signals from CCD camera 11 and sets an "ACCEPT" signal at "1" level if CCD camera 11 locates the lane markings. Controller 12 sets the "ACCEPT" signal at "0" level if CCD camera 11 loses or is searching the lane markings.

**[0035]** A torque sensor 14, such as disclosed in EP 0 555 987 B1, comprises a compliant element in the upper portion of upper shaft 2a in the vicinity of steer angle sensor 10 in order to detect torsional angle  $\phi$  of upper shaft 2a either optically or inductively. The detected torsional angle  $\phi$  represents driver input torque through steering wheel 1. A signal indicative of the detected torsional angle  $\phi$  is fed to controller 12. Controller 12 has an actual steer torque calculation module implemented in software and stored in the ROM. Using this software, controller 12 derives actual steer torque  $T_d$  from torsional angle  $\phi$ .

**[0036]** The lane-following system can be switched on and off by a driver through an automated lane-following selector switch 13. When the lane-following system is switched on, controller 12 keeps on determining a target value in operation parameter such as steer torque or steer angle. If steer torque is used as the operation parameter, steer angle sensor 10 and the actual steer angle calculation module may be omitted. In this case, controller 12 determines a target steer torque  $T_r$  based on the estimated position of target line and the lateral displacement from the lane marking. It produces a steering control signal of magnitude to provide, in turn a torque input to the steering which may assist or oppose the steering torque from the driver, whereby the actual steer torque  $T_d$  approaches the target steer torque  $T_r$ . In response to the steering control signal, electric current passing through motor 7 is regulated to provide such torque input to the steering. If steer angle is used as the operation parameter, torque sensor 14 and the actual steer torque calculation module may be omitted. In this case, controller 12 determines a target steer angle  $T_{opt}$  in response to the position of target line and the lateral displacement from the lane marking. It determines a steering control signal. In response to the steering control signal, motor 7 provides a torque input to the steering which may either assist or oppose the steering torque from the driver, such that a deviation of actual steer angle  $\theta_d$  from target steer angle  $T_{opt}$  approaches zero.

**[0037]** The flow chart of Figure 3 is a control routine implementing the present invention.

**[0038]** At step S30, the CPU inputs information from the signal processor module. The information includes lane centerline position between lane markings defining a lane, lateral displacement  $Y_n$  from one lane marking and "ACCEPT" signal.

**[0039]** At step S31, the CPU determines whether or not automated lane-following selector switch 13 is turned on. If switch 13 is turned on, at step S31, the rou-

tine proceeds to step S32. If, at step S31, the switch 13 is turned off, the routine proceeds to step S35.

[0040] At step 32, the CPU inputs a target line  $Y_{opt}$ , that is expressed in terms of a lateral position from the lane marking, out of a target line memory, and it inputs a target deviation  $\Delta Y$  out of a target deviation memory.

[0041] At the next step S33, the CPU determines a target value in operation parameter of the steering system, such as a target steer torque  $T_r$  and a target steer angle  $T_{opt}$ , in such a direction as to reduce an error between lateral displacement  $Y_n$  and the target line ( $Y_{opt} + \Delta Y$ ) toward zero.

[0042] At step S33, the CPU determines and outputs a steering control signal indicative of current passing through electric motor 7. Motor 7 provides a torque input to the steering in response to the electric current in such a manner as to bring actual steer torque  $T_d$  into agreement with target steer torque  $T_r$  or actual steer angle  $\theta_d$  into agreement with target steer angle  $T_{opt}$ .

[0043] If, at step S31, the CPU determines that selected switch 13 is turned off, the routine proceeds to step S35. At step S35, the CPU determines whether or not the vehicle travels in a lateral displacement collection mode.

[0044] Based on the recognition that lane positions selected by different drivers will not differ appreciably upon passing through a curve of a roadway, one standard of judgment, which may be used at step S35, is whether or not a radius of curve of the estimated lane centerline is sufficiently great. In other words, it is judged whether or not a roadway is generally straight. Other standard of judgment is whether or not yaw rate angle is less than a predetermined angle.

[0045] If, at step S35, the CPU determines that the vehicle travels in the lateral displacement collection mode, the routine proceeds to step S36. At step S36, the CPU stores current lateral displacement  $Y_n$  ( $n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$ ) in a lateral displacement memory RGS.

[0046] At next step S37, the CPU increases the content of timer T by one ( $T = T + 1$ ).

[0047] At step S38, the CPU determines whether or not timer T is greater than a predetermined time value  $T_o$ .

[0048] As long as  $T < T_o$  at step S38 and the interrogation at step S35 is affirmative, the CPU repeats operation to store lateral displacement  $Y_n$  in lateral displacement memory RGS. Thus, lateral displacement memory RGS collects or stocks lateral displacement data.

[0049] If, at step S35, the CPU determines that the vehicle travels outside of the lateral displacement collection mode. The routine proceeds to step S44 and then to step S45. At step S44, the CPU resets timer T equal to zero ( $T = 0$ ). At step S45, the CPU clears lateral displacement memory RGS ( $RGS = 0$ ) before returning to START point.

[0050] If, at step S38, the CPU determines that T is greater than or equal to  $T_o$  ( $T \geq T_o$ ), the routine pro-

ceeds to step S39. At step S39, the CPU inputs all of the lateral displacement data  $Y_1, Y_2, + \dots + Y_n$  from the lateral displacement memory and determines an average  $Y_{opt}^*$  by calculating the following equation:

$$Y_{opt}^* = (1/n) (Y_1 + Y_2 + \dots + Y_n).$$

Next, the routine proceeds to step S40. At step S40, the CPU determines whether or not the absolute value of  $Y_{opt}^*$  is less than or equal to a predetermined maximum  $Y_{max}$ . If this is the case, the routine proceeds to step S48. At step S48, the CPU determines whether or not the absolute value of  $Y_{opt}^*$  is greater than or equal to a predetermined minimum  $Y_{min}$ . If this is the case, the routine proceeds to step S43. At step S43, the CPU updates the target line  $Y_{opt}$  stored in the target line memory with  $Y_{opt}^*$ . Referring to Figure 4, the predetermined maximum and minimum  $Y_{max}$  and  $Y_{min}$  define limits of an allowable deviation range from the estimated lane centerline. In this example, the predetermined maximum and minimum  $Y_{max}$  and  $Y_{min}$  can be expressed as,

$$Y_{max} = Y_c + \Delta W,$$

$$Y_{min} = Y_c - \Delta W,$$

where:

$Y_c$  is lateral displacement of lane centerline, and  $\Delta W$  is maximum deviation.

If  $|Y_{opt}^*| > Y_{max}$ , the interrogation at step S40 results in negative and the routine proceeds to step S42. At step S42, the CPU sets  $Y_{max}$  as  $Y_{opt}^*$  before the routine proceeds to step S43. If  $|Y_{opt}^*| < Y_{min}$ , the interrogation at step S48 results in negative and the routine proceeds to step S49. At step S49, the CPU sets  $Y_{min}$  as  $Y_{opt}^*$  before the routine proceeds to step S43.

[0051] After the CPU has overwritten the target line  $Y_{opt}$  at step S43, the routine proceeds to steps 44 and 45 before returning to START point.

#### Automated Steering During Lateral Control for Lane Following

[0052] If selector switch 13 is turned on to select lateral control for lane following, a flow along steps S30, S31, S32, S33 and S34 is repeated. At step S34, the CPU outputs steering control signal. In response to this steering control signal, electric current passing through motor 7 is regulated. Motor 7 provides a torque input to the steering in such a direction as to bring actual steer torque  $T_d$  into agreement with target steer torque or actual steer angle  $\theta_d$  into agreement with target steer an-

gle T<sub>opt</sub>. In this manner, the vehicle is guided toward the target line.

#### Updating Target Line

[0053] Learning is conducted to obtain preferred lane position taken by a driver to provide a target line reflecting the driver's preferred lane position. This target line is used to overwrite the preceding target line. Subsequently, lateral control using this new target line is conducted.

[0054] Learning is initiated after driver has turned off selector switch 13. In this case, the interrogation at step S31 stays negative, allowing the routine to proceed along steps S35, 536, S37, and S38 as long as  $T < T_o$  and the lateral displacement collection mode is satisfied. Lateral displacement  $Y_n$  is stored in lateral displacement memory RGS. This operation is repeated until  $T$  becomes equal to or greater than  $T_o$ . If, at step S38, it is determined that  $T \geq T_o$ , the routine proceeds to step S39 and then to step S43. At step S43, the CPU overwrites the existing target line with a new target line created based on the data obtained at step S39.

#### Conditions Permitting Rewriting Target line

[0055] It is not that lateral displacement is always collected for producing a new target line when selector switch 13 is turned off. Unless the lateral displacement collection mode is accomplished (see step S35), the lateral displacement is not collected even when selector switch 13 is turned off (see step S31).

[0056] At step S35, what may be required as standard for judgment is whether or not a radius of curve of a roadway is sufficiently great. If the radius of curve of the roadway is sufficiently great, indicating that the roadway is generally straight, lateral displacement is stored for producing a new target line.

[0057] Figure 5 illustrates variation of lateral displacement  $Y_n$  collected for a historical reference time  $T_o$  immediately after the lateral displacement collection mode has begun. The average  $Y_{opt}^*$  of these lateral displacement data is used to rewrite target line  $Y_{opt}$ .

[0058] Individual favorite lane positions by drivers are not reflected when a vehicle travels along a curve. Lateral displacements obtained during such travelling condition are not used in producing a target line. Accordingly, rewritten target lines  $Y_{opt}$  correspond to individual favorites of drivers.

#### Allowable Deviation Range of Target Line

[0059] Referring to Figure 4, rewritten target line is confined within the allowable deviation range from the lane centerline between lane markings. This may be confirmed by reviewing steps S40, S42, S48, and S49 in Figure 3. In the example of Figure 4, the maximum deviation  $\Delta W$  is 0.1 if the width of a lane is 1.0.

[0060] Accordingly, excessive deviation from the lane centerline is prohibited.

[0061] Figures 6 and 7 illustrate another feature that may be added to the preceding embodiment illustrated in Figures 2 to 5. According to this feature, driver steering torque from  $T_d$  is always detected during lateral control for lane following. Immediately after a torque data collection mode has been accomplished when a vehicle travels on a generally straight roadway, time integral  $\Sigma T_d$  of detected driver steering torque  $T_d$  is calculated. This calculation continues for a historical reference time until  $\Sigma T_d$  exceeds a preset threshold value  $T_{th}$ . Upon elapse of the historical reference time, the average of steering torque data obtained during the historical reference time is calculated. Target deviation  $\Delta Y$  is altered upon elapse of the historical reference time (see Figure 7) in such a direction as to reduce the calculated average of steering torque toward zero.

[0062] In this manner, during lateral control for lane following, updating  $\Delta Y$  causes a reduction in driver steering torque needed to hold a vehicle at a target line. As a result, should the driver release the steering wheel, the vehicle will be held at the driver favorite lane position.

[0063] In the example of Figures 6 and 7, the driver steering torque  $T_d$  is used. The driver steering torque may be replaced with steering control signal. In this case, the average of steering control signal data collected during a historical reference time is calculated. Upon elapse of the historical reference time, the target deviation  $\Delta Y$  is updated in such a direction as to reduce the calculated average of steering control signal data toward zero.

[0064] In this manner, during lateral control for lane following, updating  $\Delta Y$  causes a reduction in driver steering torque needed to hold a vehicle at a target line. As a result, should the driver release the steering wheel, the vehicle will be held at the driver favorite lane position.

#### Claims

1. A lane-following system for facilitating steering of a vehicle by tracking a lane of a roadway, the lane-following system comprising:

means (98) for detecting the position of lane marking on the surface of a roadway in relation to the vehicle, the lane marking defining a lane of a roadway, the said means (98) being operatively coupled to means (12) for estimating a lateral displacement ( $Y_n$ ) of a point at a preview distance in front of the vehicle from the detected lane marking;

actuating means (7), coupled to a steering mechanism, for providing a steering bias to a steering system, which may either assist or op-

pose steer torque from a driver, in response to a steering control signal; and control means (12) for producing the steering control signal based on the estimated lateral displacement ( $Y_n$ ) to assist the driver to maintain the vehicle at a target line within the lane using steering bias,

**characterised in that:**

(a) the control means (12) is operable, when the vehicle travels without lateral control for lane following, to determine whether or not the current travelling condition of the vehicle is appropriate for the purpose of collecting the estimated lateral displacement ( $Y_n$ ) for production of lateral displacement data,

(b) the control means (12) is operable, when it is determined that the current travelling condition of the vehicle is appropriate for the said purpose under a condition where the vehicle travels without lateral control for lane following, to collect the estimated lateral displacement ( $Y_n$ ) within a historical reference time to provide the lateral displacement data,

(c) the control means (12) is operable to calculate an average of the lateral displacement data based on the estimated lateral displacement collected within the historical reference time, and

(d) the control means (12) is operable to update the position of the target line using the average of the lateral displacement data.

2. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the control means (12) is operable to determine whether or not a deviation of a roadway from straightness is less than a predetermined magnitude.

3. A system as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the control means (12) is operable to limit a difference between the position of the target line and the position of the lane centerline within a predetermined window set around the lane centerline.

4. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a torque sensor (14) for detecting steer torque from the driver, wherein, during lateral control for lane following, the control means (12) is operable to update a target deviation from the target line upon elapse of a historical reference time in such a manner as to reduce toward zero the average of steer torque data collected within the historical reference time.

5. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein, during lateral control for lane following, the control means (12) is operable to update a target deviation

from the target line upon elapse of a historical reference time in such a manner as to reduce toward zero the average of the steering control signal data collected within the historical reference time.

6. A method of facilitating steering of a vehicle by tracking a lane of a roadway, the method comprising:

detecting the position of lane marking on the surface of a roadway in relation to the vehicle, the lane marking defining a lane of a roadway; estimating a lateral displacement of a point at a preview distance in front of the vehicle from the detected lane marking;

producing a steering control signal based on the estimated lateral displacement to assist a driver of the vehicle to maintain the vehicle at a target line within the lane using a steering bias; and

providing a steering bias to a steering system, which may either assist or oppose steer torque from the driver, in response to the steering control signal;

**characterised by the steps of**

(a) when the vehicle travels without lateral control for lane following, determining whether or not the current travelling condition of the vehicle is appropriate for the purpose of collecting the estimated lateral displacement for production of lateral displacement data,

(b) when it is determined that the current travelling condition of the vehicle is appropriate for the said purpose under a condition where the vehicle travels without lateral control for lane following, collecting the estimated lateral displacement within a historical reference time to provide the lateral displacement data,

(c) calculating an average of the lateral displacement data based on the estimated lateral displacement collected within the historical reference time, and

(d) updating the position of the target line using the average of the lateral displacement data.

**Patentansprüche**

1. Fahrspur-Verfolgungssystem zum Erleichtern eines Lenkens eines Fahrzeugs durch Folgen einer Fahrspur einer Straße, wobei das Fahrspur-Verfolgungssystem umfasst:

eine Einrichtung (98) zum Erfassen der Position einer Fahrspurmarkierung auf der Oberfläche einer Straße in Bezug auf das Fahrzeug,

wobei die Fahrspurmarkierung eine Fahrspur einer Straße definiert, wobei die Einrichtung (98) betriebsmäßig mit einer Einrichtung (12) zum Abschätzen einer lateralen Verschiebung ( $Y_n$ ) von einem Punkt in einem Vorhersehungsabstand vor dem Fahrzeug von der erfassten Fahrspurmarkierung gekoppelt ist;

eine Stelleinrichtung (7), die mit einem Lenkmechanismus gekoppelt ist, zum Bereitstellen einer Lenkvorbelastung an einem Lenksystem, die ein Lenkdrehmoment von einem Fahrer entweder unterstützen oder diesem entgegenwirken kann, im Ansprechen auf ein Lenksteuersignal; und

eine Steuereinrichtung (12) zum Erzeugen des Lenksteuersignals auf Grundlage der abgeschätzten lateralen Verschiebung ( $Y_n$ ), um den Fahrer zum Halten des Fahrzeugs auf einer Ziellinie innerhalb der Fahrspur unter Verwendung der Lenkvorbelastung zu unterstützen;

**dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass:**

(a) die Steuereinrichtung (12) betreibbar ist, um dann, wenn sich das Fahrzeug ohne eine laterale Steuerung für eine Fahrspur-Verfolgung bewegt, zu bestimmen, ob die gegenwärtige Bewegungsbedingung des Fahrzeugs für den Zweck einer Sammlung der abgeschätzten lateralen Verschiebung ( $Y_n$ ) für eine Erzeugung von Lateralverschiebungsdaten geeignet ist oder nicht,

(b) die Steuereinrichtung (12) betreibbar ist, um dann, wenn bestimmt wird, dass die gegenwärtige Bewegungsbedingung des Fahrzeugs für den Zweck unter einer Bedingung geeignet ist, bei der sich das Fahrzeug ohne eine laterale Steuerung für eine Fahrspur-Verfolgung bewegt, die abgeschätzte laterale Verschiebung ( $Y_n$ ) innerhalb einer historischen Referenzzeit zu sammeln, um die Lateralverschiebungsdaten bereitzustellen,

(c) die Steuereinrichtung (12) betreibbar ist, um einen Durchschnitt der Lateralverschiebungsdaten auf Grundlage der abgeschätzten lateralen Verschiebung, die innerhalb der historischen Referenzzeit gesammelt wird, zu berechnen, und

(d) die Steuereinrichtung (12) betreibbar ist, um die Position der Ziellinie unter Verwendung des Durchschnitts der Lateralverschiebungsdaten zu aktualisieren.

2. System nach Anspruch 1, wobei die Steuereinrichtung (12) betreibbar ist, um zu bestimmen, ob eine Abweichung einer Straße von einem geraden Zustand geringer als eine vorgegebene Größe ist oder nicht.

3. System nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, wobei die Steuereinrichtung (12) betreibbar ist, um eine Differenz zwischen der Position der Ziellinie und der Position der Fahrspurmittellinie innerhalb eines vorgegebenen Fensters, welches um die Fahrspurmittellinie herum eingestellt ist, zu begrenzen.

4. System nach irgendeinem vorangehenden Anspruch, ferner umfassend einen Drehmomentsensor (14) zum Erfassen eines Lenkdrehmoments von dem Fahrer, wobei während einer lateralen Steuerung für eine Fahrspur-Verfolgung die Steuereinrichtung (12) betreibbar ist, um eine Zielabweichung von der Ziellinie auf einen Ablauf einer historischen Referenzzeit hin in einer derartigen Weise zu aktualisieren, um den Durchschnitt von Lenkdrehmomentdaten, die innerhalb der historischen Referenzzeit gesammelt werden, in Richtung auf Null hin zu verringern.

5. System nach irgendeinem vorangehenden Anspruch, wobei während einer lateralen Steuerung für eine Fahrspur-Verfolgung die Steuereinrichtung (12) betreibbar ist, um eine Zielabweichung von der Ziellinie auf einen Ablauf einer historischen Referenzzeit hin in einer derartigen Weise zu aktualisieren, um den Durchschnitt der Lenksteuerungssignaldaten, die innerhalb der historischen Referenzzeit gesammelt werden, in Richtung auf Null hin zu verringern.

6. Verfahren zum Erleichtern eines Lenkens eines Fahrzeugs durch Folgen einer Fahrspur einer Straße, wobei das Verfahren die folgenden Schritte umfasst:

Erfassen der Position einer Fahrspurmarkierung auf der Oberfläche einer Straße in Bezug auf das Fahrzeug, wobei die Fahrspurmarkierung eine Fahrspur einer Straße definiert; Abschätzen einer lateralen Verschiebung eines Punkts in einem Vorhersehungsabstand vor dem Fahrzeug von der erfassten Fahrspurmarkierung; Erzeugen eines Lenksteuersignals auf Grundlage der abgeschätzten lateralen Verschiebung, um einen Fahrer des Fahrzeugs zum Halten des Fahrzeugs an einer Ziellinie innerhalb der Fahrspur unter Verwendung einer Lenkvorbelastung zu unterstützen; Bereitstellen einer Lenkvorbelastung an einem Lenksystem, die ein Lenkdrehmoment von

dem Fahrer entweder unterstützen oder diesem entgegenwirken kann, im Ansprechen auf das Lenksteuersignal;

**gekennzeichnet durch** die folgenden Schritte: 5

(a) wenn sich das Fahrzeug ohne eine laterale Steuerung für eine Fahrspur-Verfolgung bewegt, Bestimmen, ob die gegenwärtige Bewegungsbedingung des Fahrzeugs zu dem Zweck einer Sammlung der abgeschätzten Lateralverschiebungsdaten geeignet ist oder nicht, 10 15

(b) wenn bestimmt wird, dass die gegenwärtige Fahrbedingung des Fahrzeugs für den Zweck unter einer Bedingung, bei der das Fahrzeug sich ohne eine laterale Steuerung für eine Fahrspur-Verfolgung bewegt, geeignet ist, Sammeln der abgeschätzten lateralen Verschiebung innerhalb einer historischen Referenzzeit, um die Lateralverschiebungsdaten bereitzustellen, 20 25

(c) Berechnen eines Durchschnitts der Lateralverschiebungsdaten auf Grundlage der abgeschätzten Lateralverschiebung, die innerhalb der historischen Referenzzeit gesammelt wird, und 30

(d) Aktualisieren der Position der Ziellinie unter Verwendung des Durchschnitts der Lateralverschiebungsdaten. 35

## Revendications

1. Système de suivi de voie pour faciliter la direction d'un véhicule en poursuivant une voie d'une chaussée, le système de suivi de voie comprenant: 40

un moyen (98) pour détecter la position d'un marquage de voie sur la surface d'une chaussée en relation avec le véhicule, le marquage de voie définissant une voie d'une chaussée, ledit moyen (98) étant couplé en fonctionnement à un moyen (12) pour estimer un déplacement latéral ( $Y_n$ ) d'un point à une distance de prévisualisation à l'avant du véhicule par rapport au marquage de voie détecté; 45 50

un moyen d'actionnement (7), couplé à un mécanisme de direction, pour appliquer une poussée de direction à un système de direction, qui peut être soit en assistance, soit en opposition par rapport à un couple de direction émanant 55

d'un conducteur, en réponse à un signal de commande de direction; et

un moyen de commande (12) pour produire le signal de commande de direction sur la base du déplacement latéral estimé ( $Y_n$ ) afin d'assister le conducteur dans son maintien du véhicule selon une ligne cible à l'intérieur de la voie en utilisant une poussée de direction,

## caractérisé en ce que:

(a) le moyen de commande (12) peut fonctionner, lorsque le véhicule avance sans commande latérale pour un suivi de voie, pour déterminer si oui ou non la condition d'avancée courante du véhicule convient dans le but de collecter le déplacement latéral estimé ( $Y_n$ ) pour la production de données de déplacement latéral;

(b) le moyen de commande (12) peut fonctionner, lorsqu'il est déterminé que la condition d'avancée courante du véhicule convient pour ledit but sous une condition dans laquelle le véhicule avance sans commande latérale pour un suivi de voie, pour collecter le déplacement latéral estimé ( $Y_n$ ) dans un temps de référence historique afin de produire les données de déplacement latéral;

(c) le moyen de commande (12) peut fonctionner pour calculer une moyenne des données de déplacement latéral sur la base du déplacement latéral estimé collecté dans le temps de référence historique; et

(d) le moyen de commande (12) peut fonctionner pour mettre à jour la position de la ligne cible en utilisant la moyenne des données de déplacement latéral.

2. Système selon la revendication 1, dans lequel le moyen de commande (12) peut fonctionner pour déterminer si oui ou non une déviation d'une chaussée par rapport à un caractère rectiligne est inférieure à une amplitude prédéterminée.

3. Système selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans lequel le moyen de commande (12) peut fonctionner pour limiter une différence entre la position de la ligne cible et la position de la ligne centrale de voie dans une fenêtre prédéterminée qui est établie autour de la ligne centrale de voie.

4. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, comprenant en outre un capteur de couple (14) pour détecter un couple de direction

émanant du conducteur, dans lequel, pendant une commande latérale pour un suivi de voie, le moyen de commande (12) peut fonctionner pour mettre à jour une déviation cible par rapport à la ligne cible suite à l'écoulement d'un temps de référence historique de manière à réduire en direction de zéro la moyenne de données de couple de direction qui sont collectées dans le temps de référence historique.

5

10

5. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel, pendant une commande latérale pour un suivi de voie, le moyen de commande (12) peut fonctionner pour mettre à jour une déviation cible par rapport à la ligne cible suite à l'écoulement d'un temps de référence historique de manière à réduire en direction de zéro la moyenne des données de signal de commande de direction qui sont collectées dans le temps de référence historique.

15

20

6. Procédé pour faciliter la direction d'un véhicule en poursuivant une voie d'une chaussée, le procédé comprenant:

25

la détection de la position d'un marquage de voie sur la surface d'une chaussée en relation avec le véhicule, le marquage de voie définissant une voie d'une chaussée;

l'estimation d'un déplacement latéral d'un point à une distance de prévisualisation à l'avant du véhicule par rapport au marquage de voie détecté;

30

la production d'un signal de commande de direction sur la base du déplacement latéral estimé afin d'assister un conducteur du véhicule dans son maintien du véhicule selon une ligne cible à l'intérieur de la voie en utilisant une poussée de direction; et

35

l'application d'une poussée de direction sur un système de direction qui peut être soit un couple de direction assistée, soit en assistance, soit en opposition par rapport à un couple de direction émanant du conducteur, en réponse au signal de commande de direction,

40

45

**caractérisé par les étapes de:**

(a) lorsque le véhicule avance sans commande latérale pour un suivi de voie, détermination de si oui ou non la condition d'avancée courante du véhicule convient dans le but de collecter le déplacement latéral estimé pour la production de données de déplacement latéral;

50

55

(b) lorsqu'il est déterminé que la condition d'avancée courante du véhicule convient pour ledit but sous une condition dans laquelle le vé-

hicule avance sans commande latérale pour un suivi de voie, collecte du déplacement latéral estimé dans un temps de référence historique afin de produire les données de déplacement latéral;

(c) calcul d'une moyenne des données de déplacement latéral sur la base du déplacement latéral estimé collecté dans le temps de référence historique; et

(d) mise à jour de la position de la ligne cible en utilisant la moyenne des données de déplacement latéral.

FIG.1

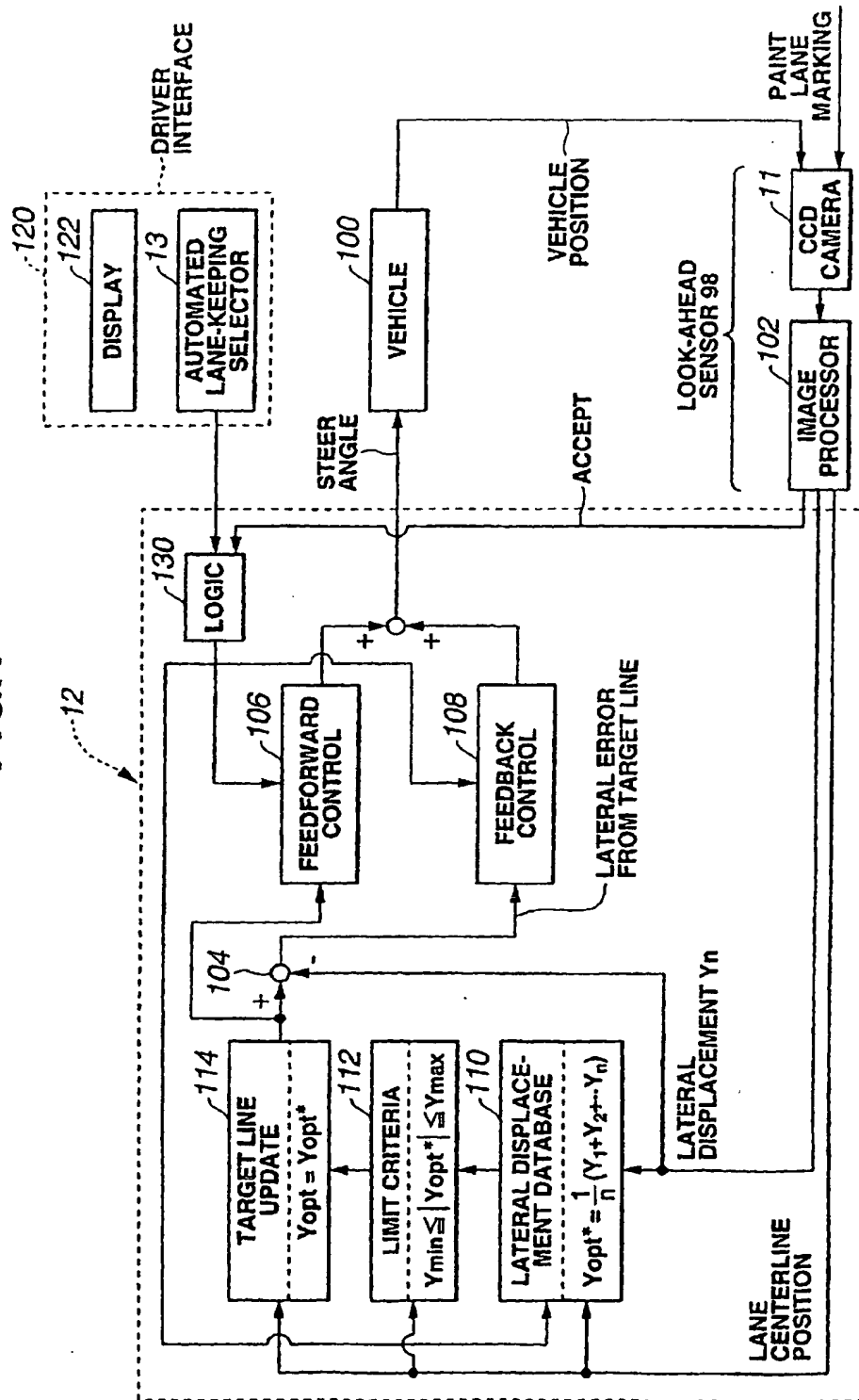


FIG.2

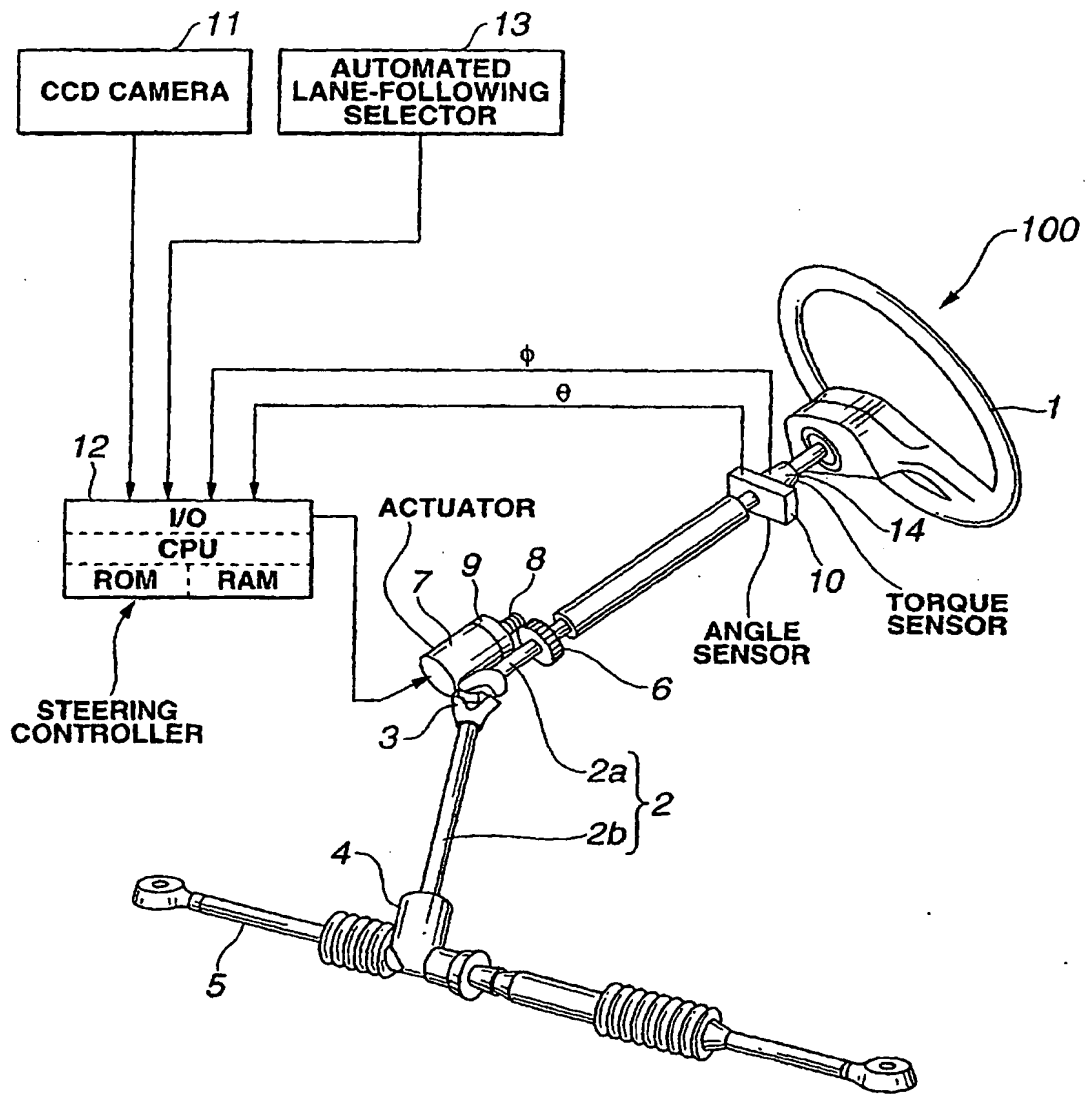


FIG.3

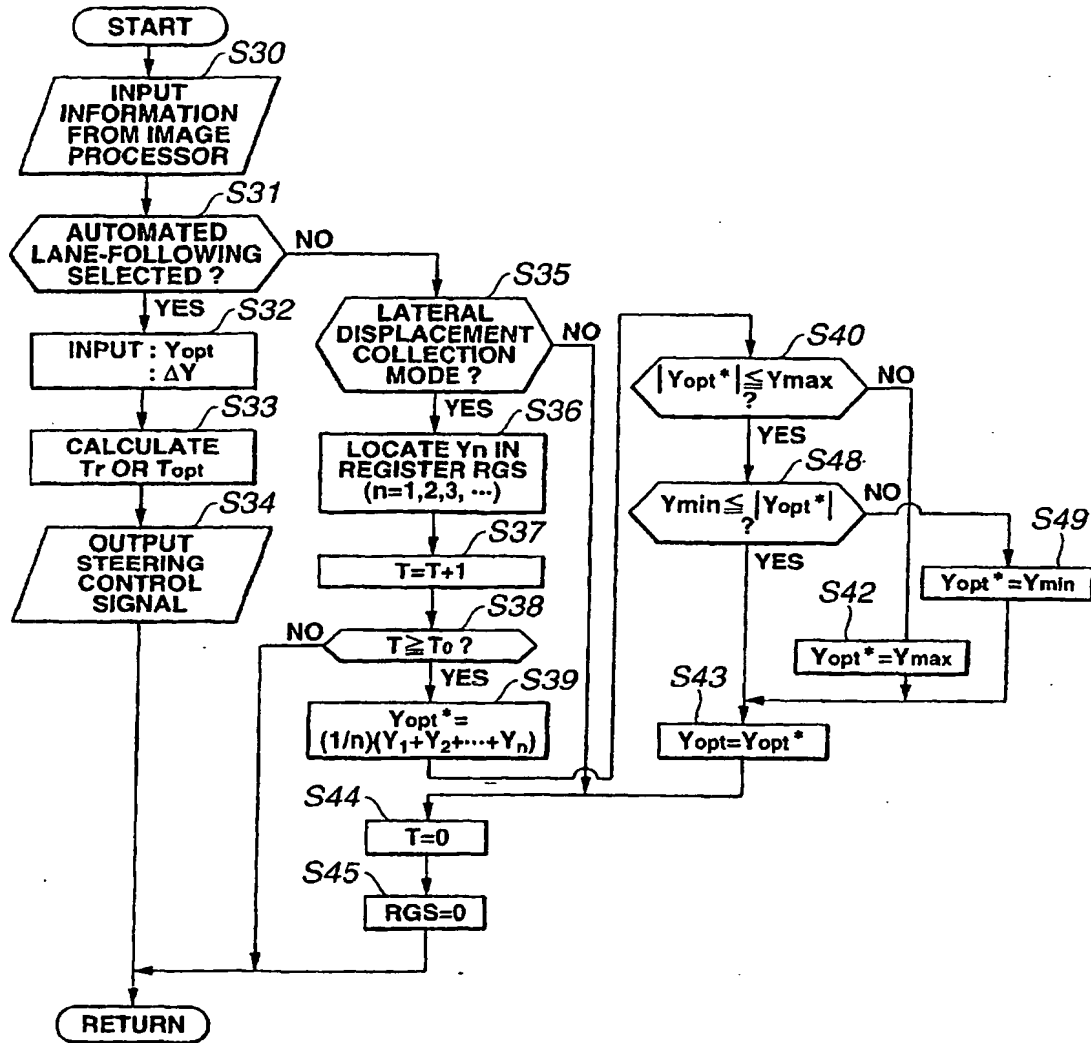


FIG.4

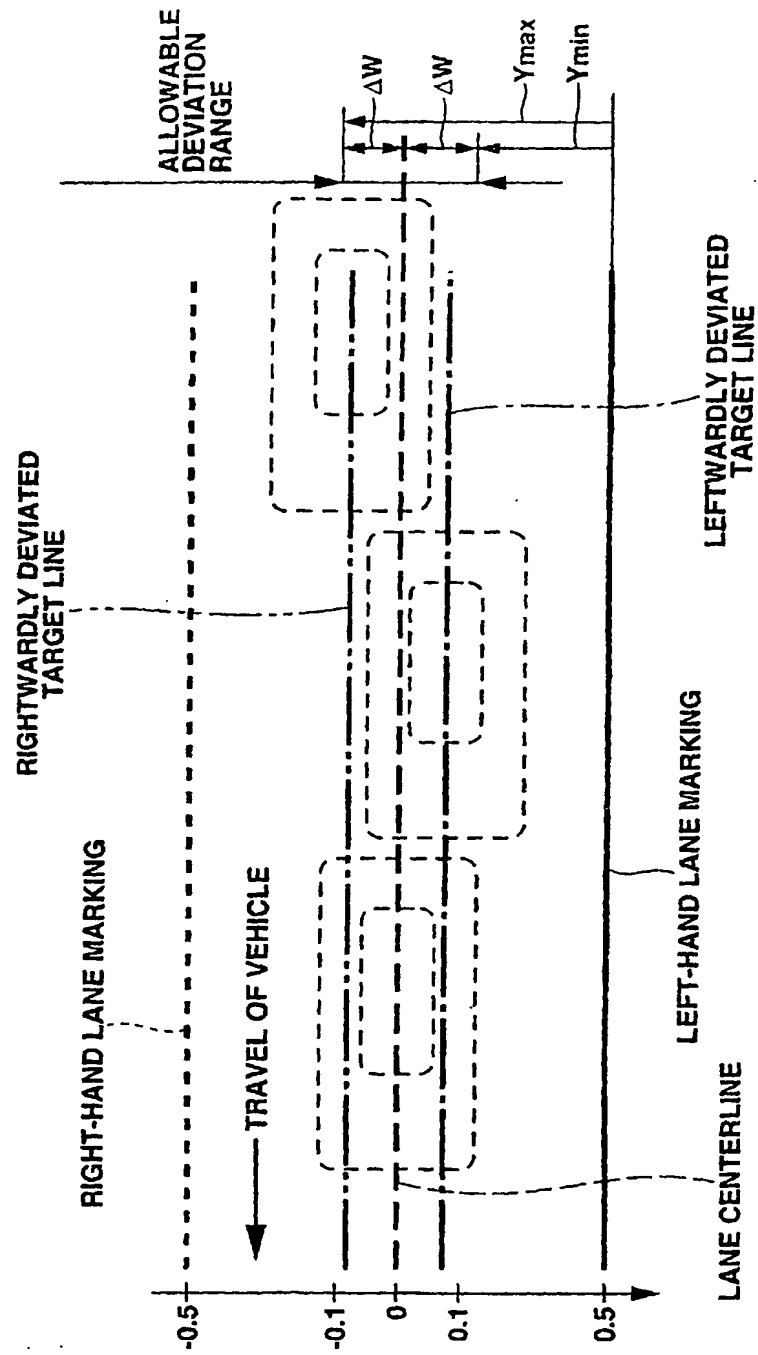


FIG.5

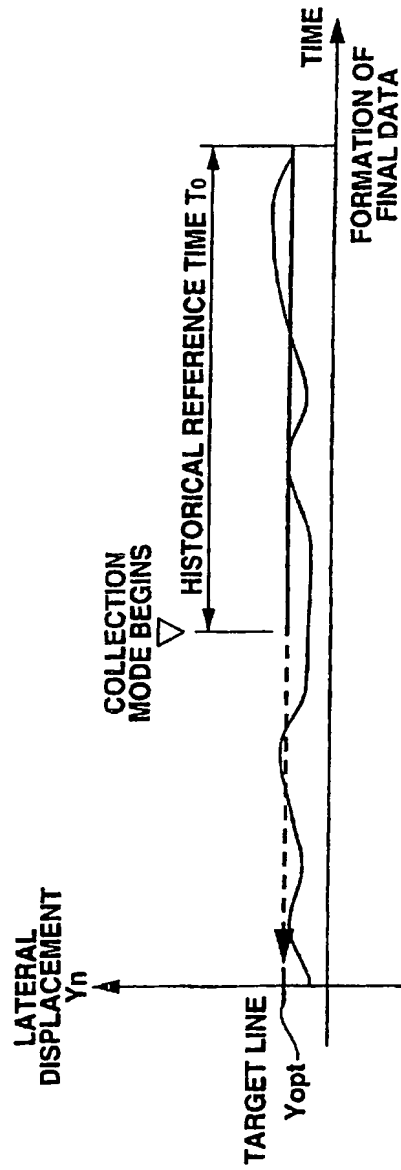


FIG.6

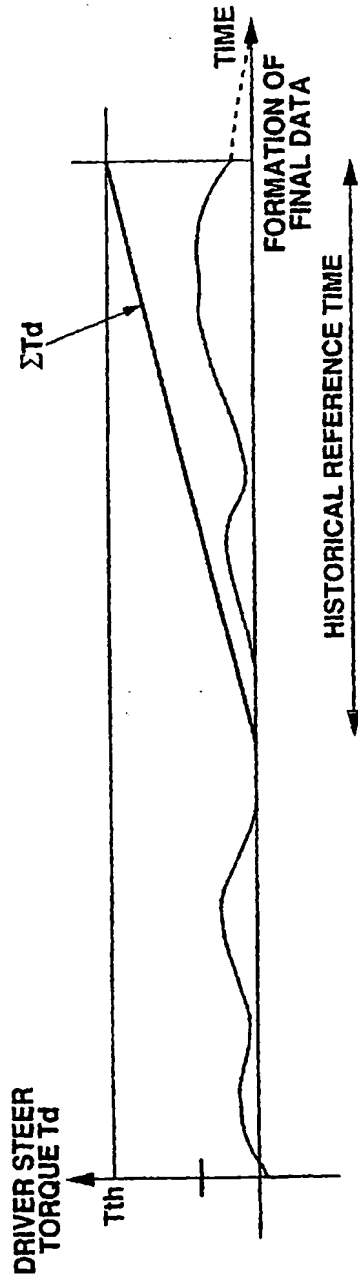


FIG.7

